

✠ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. ✠

Judica marks the beginning of Passion Tide, the intensification of Lent as we approach ever nearer to Palm Sunday and Holy Week, to Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and Easter morning. And in all the hubbub and excitement and the depth of Lent, it is easy to forget where we came from, to lose our way, to take our eyes off the cross.

It is easy to look forward to Easter without first looking at Good Friday. The fast is indeed long. And it's easy, for we indeed are a forgetful people, to forget where we have come from. It's easy to forget that we came out of Epiphany not too long ago, where we saw Christ proclaimed as the Son of the living God, by whom the universe was made. Where we saw Christ proclaimed as the one who calms the wind and the waves, the one to whom even creation bows and listens, the one who cures sickness and ailment, with but a word.

And it's even easier in the depths of Lent to forget that only months ago we were celebrating Advent, rejoicing as we looked forward to the second coming of Christ through the lens of his incarnation. It's easy to forget that every morning means Christ's return is more and more imminent, that the resurrection of the flesh is more and more imminent. The day which no one knows will come when all the dead are raised and those who have done good are raised to everlasting life, and those without faith will be cast into the eternal fire.

It's easy to forget the great hope and comfort of the Christian faith. in the midst of Lent. Because all too often, Lent becomes a season of darkness. Holy Week becomes a slog as we hear once again our Lord betrayed, crucified, hit, whipped, crowned with thorns, and mocked with purple vestments. This is not how we are to view Holy Week. This is not how Abraham viewed Holy Week. For Abraham understood the reality of the resurrection. Christ our Lord says it, Abraham rejoiced to see my day. And what day is that but Good Friday, and Easter morning? When Christ our Lord snags you, snags Abraham, snags all the faithful out of the jaws of death, and promises by his blood that is more holy and precious than any of the blood of bulls, goats, and heifers that could ever have been poured out in the temple.

He wins and buys you back with his holy and precious blood. Yes, Good Friday and Holy Week are somber affairs, but they are not joyless. It is Good Friday. Not bad. Not wicked. Not dark. Good. And God alone is good. And Abraham knew this. You heard it in our reading this morning. "Stay here with the donkey, Abraham says. I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you."

He knows he and Isaac will return. Maybe it's not tomorrow. Maybe it's not the next day. But Isaac is the child of promise. He is the type of Christ. He is the type of the Savior. He is the means by which the promise of God has been given. And so if God says to sacrifice him on the altar, God will work it out. He will work even the sacrifice of Isaac for the good of all people. And Abraham knows that the day of resurrection is coming. And Isaac knows it, too.

Abraham is not exactly young. He is well past the days of childbearing as was his wife Sarah. And Isaac... like Christ opens not his mouth. As his father lays the wood, as his father binds him to the altar, Isaac allows it. He doesn't subdue Abraham and run off, but he goes, and he submits himself to the will of his father, trusting the word of God. And even as Abraham lifts up the knife, Isaac doesn't cry out. Because he, like Abraham, knows the resurrection is coming. And of course, we know the story. The angel stops the hand of Abraham, and the resurrection is not yet. Isaac is only metaphorically brought back from the dead. The greater day is still to come.

The day that Abraham rejoices to see. The day where Christ our Lord, like Isaac before him, allows himself to be bound. To be attached to an altar and for his father to will it. And only this time, there is no angel to stay the knife; there are but Roman guards to hammer the nails and plunge the spear. And yet even in this, we rejoice. For resurrection is coming.

Even as we look at Passion Week today, as we look at Holy Week, as we look at Good Friday, the temptation is to only see the dark things; to see it in this emotional fervor, that if we can just build up enough sorrow in our heart, then we can somehow see what it is about. These events are not purely sorrowful. Yes, it was a great cost. But it was a cost that our Lord willingly gave. Yes, it cost God his own life to save the world from her sin. It was God's will and God's plan. It was not some accident. It was purposeful, deliberate. It was foretold even by Abraham and Isaac. For what takes

Isaac's place but a ram with a crown of thorns? A ram caught by its head in a thicket a picture of Christ. You can hear John the Baptist crying out, Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

As a lamb is laid under the knife, Isaac goes free. The same is true for you. Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. We don't shy away from crucifixes. We don't shy away from the Holy Week, from the events that transpired. We put them rightly in their place, knowing that resurrection is coming, knowing that it is by the crucifix, it is by the body of God hanging there for us, that we are released from our bonds to sin, death, and the darkness of this world. And by that very body we are healed, by his stripes we are healed.

These last few weeks of Lent, do not give in to despair. Do not give in to this over-emotional mentality that Holy Week is this great, horrible retelling of the story as if we do not know the ending. The ending has been known since the beginning. He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel. The cross was always there. Christ was always there to take your place. He is the lamb who was slain from before the foundation of the world. He is the lamb, the perfect offering, the fulfillment, and the purpose of all the Old Testament sacrifices, of all the Old Testament types. He is the true Isaac who is bound that you might be free. As we go into Holy Week, behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Behold the Lamb of God who takes away your sins. Look to the cross and rejoice with Abraham to see the Lord's day. The resurrection is coming.

✠ In Jesus' name, Amen. ✠